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haps, and feathery bamboos—which the owner designs to paint there at his leisure. For these lovely and fanciful accessories of color and carving are the work of the artist hand of its owner, carried out with palette and graver in the leisure hours spared from his profession. Wealthy men who buy piles of pinnacled brick and granite and magnificent design, who roof their libraries with Gothic oak and panel them in damask, and squander thousands on old cabinets, can never own their homes in the sense a man does, whose house is his own creation from the first lines of its drawing, whose pencil knows the scrolls of its leafage, and whose deft hands have wrought every device of grace and convenience which distinguishes it from other homes. For years Dr. Hamilton and his wife have been gathering for their home, in summer vacations here and abroad, in sales-rooms and old country houses, collecting here a tile and there a carving, a print or a piece of majolica, a pattern or an inspiration. One might fancy two people addressing themselves to house-furnishing in such a spirit, as they might set off on a continental tour, or go yachting, or any other approved method of diversion. The corner at the head of the stairs is usually the awkward spot of all the house—a bare angle, honored by being occupied by a starveling house-plant, or a spare bedroom chair, or, most execrable of all, a statue. Of all terrors of vapidness, the statue which stands in a hall niche or at the head of the stairs is the most soul-dismaying nightmare of vacuity. Of the twin deities of ugliness, a commonplace statue or a Chinese dragon, I prefer the dragon. But the nook at the head of the stairs here is transformed into a suit of bracketed Japanese shelves, which are the convenient receptacle of quaint candlesticks, bits of china, embroidered napkins, and other picturesque litter. The water-pipes ran in this corner, in the ugly square casing which disfigures so many corners in city houses, but the capabilities of the situation were seized upon, and the corner built up with those cunning irregular tiers of shelves which owe their being to Dr. Hamilton's fret-saw. That clever tool redeems the whole tribe of fret-saws from disgrace, for it proves that the cheap sawing, vulgar in every curve and flourish, which floods the country is one thing, and sawing in wood an inch thick, with the angular Japanese intricacies, simple of line and subtle in effect, is quite another. A well-handled saw follows the graceful Hindoo lattice fret admirably, and this hint may indicate a new field of decoration to amateur mechanics.

Ample curtains of coffee-colored jute, with their warm blazonry of sunflower disks and golden-green rushes and dragon-flies, break the length of the passage with their flowing lines, and disclose glimpses of the feminine and charming drawing-room—a very woman's haunt of needlework, lace, and knickknacks. Women in general fail in furnishing in one of two ways, by rigidly limiting everything to two contrasting colors, or by admitting anything pleasing in its own color, like the flowers in an ill-chosen nosegay. By and by, I suppose, the scale of colors will be so divided and understood that artists can write their harmonies, and other people can follow them, but now every one is his own composer, and the result is very much as if every man made his own music. The prevailing color of the saloon is dim sky-blue, but so relieved against pale gray and overlaid with touches of gold, cardinal, and black fringes and embroideries that the chilly air of rooms in blue yields to a polite gayety of tone, lowered yet captivating, like the mirth of good society. Such a room is meant for compliments, for repartee between work-box and basket-chair, and seems yet bright with the tints of piquant tea-gowns and scarcely hushed from the scented flutter of fans over late gossip and afternoon tea. Walls and couches are mixed India blue tint, like noon sky dimmed with milky cloud, and the carpet is indefinite pattern with gay border to correspond. On acquaintance this inviting room will be found to owe most of its charm to the needle craft of its mistress. Feminine fancy executed that luxurious mantel drapery in blue velvet with deep vandykes of guipure, planned with no parsimonious hand—for, ladies, you know you are apt to stint the lace on your mantels and velvet stands. The three windows are hung with what I thought on entering were curtains of foreign taste, but they were not lessened in my estimation on finding them the design and handiwork of Mrs. Hamilton, who has chosen them in delicate gray cotton plush, with bands of pale blue silesia, whose embroideries in velvets and raised silks enhanced them to a beauty beyond that of boudoir damasks. A seductive gypsy table in blue velvet and

lace like the mantel completed the blue furnishings; its fellow, a gorgeous low table in old gold and deep red plush, bright with gold-thread and filoselle, with an ebony and gilt wicker-chair, a low seat in crimson velvet, embroidered with spangles and Spanish silks, cushions of Turkish work and bits of rose and blue china, gave flowery touches to the quiet room. But the most unique object in it was the low bookcase at one end, lightly touched with the chisel, but decorated, in odd, graceful fancy, with spring flowers painted lightly on the wood, drifting across the pale ash panels in soft tints, as if the hand of spring had passed across it, dropping iris and cowslip, red maple spray and wondering butterfly, careless and faint in poetic decoration. The same graceful easy fashion grouped the shelves with choice books and china and such dainty implements as belong to parlor occupations. I fear these recollections fail to convey the charm which pencil and needle together have wrought out in this favored house, and I would not like to vouch for every thread of description, writing at the lapse of months since the last glimpse of its rooms. But I hear it spoken of by acquaintances with bated breath, as "a superbly furnished house," when only the intimate friends know how much that seems expensive is due to the priceless art which in this home interior leaves comfort just where it blends with luxury. Why should not the work of a man and woman of taste surpass an upholsterer's in the arrangement of their own house? And if in place of spinning the linen and hangings for her house the modern lady embroiders its curtains and furnishings, should she not take rank with those notable and noble spinsters of old, whose coverlets and tapestries are the pride of ancient houses of Great Britain?

"Here are couches—
Let our friendship through them offer ease,
And bring the brightness of each flower.
Sweet iris, and the sunflower warm and wide,
Bid your eyes welcome wheresoe'er they turn."

SHIRLEY DARE.

REFORM IN GRAND PIANOS.

WE are pleased to find by a notice in The London Academy that the much-needed reform in the shape and decoration of the grand piano begun last year in England by Messrs. Broadwood, has not been abandoned. In the October number of THE ART AMATEUR we described at some length the beautiful piano made by that firm for the artist Mr. Alma Tadmor, constructed after drawings and designs by Mr. G. E. Fox, an architect of repute, and decorated by the artist himself. It is another and no less renowned English artist (Mr. Burne Jones) who this time has furnished not only the decorations, but the form of the new grand piano made by Messrs. Broadwood, who have been induced by him to modify the usual inartistic curve to one more subtle and beautiful. The writer in The Academy says:

"Seldom has so great an improvement been caused by so slight an alteration, and it is to be hoped that these instruments in future will no longer present a shape which spoils the appearance of the most carefully arranged room. In the decorations themselves Mr. Burne Jones has achieved a remarkable success, not only decoratively, but in the spiritual beauty of the designs which adorn it. The case is made of oak painted with various shades of olive-green and brown. On the sides are eleven circular disks, each inclosing a design from the story of Orpheus and Eurydice, in which the genius of Mr. Burne Jones is seen at its highest. Although only 'en grisaille,' we doubt whether even his Pygmalion series equal in subtle expression and beauty of line these exquisite designs. The first shows Orpheus and Eurydice happy on earth, a simple, sweet, and graceful picture of pure love, which is only excelled in beauty by the next, where Eurydice is sinking to the earth from her lover's arms. For beauty of line and for intensity of sentiment, neither morbid, nor affected, nor strained, we know nothing which excels this masterly design. In the third scene Orpheus is entering the gloomy portal of the infernal regions. The air of the upper world still causes his robe to flutter, but his foot is on the threshold of an awful, barren, and rapidly descending defile, narrowing to a sunless cave. In the next disk is Cerberus, simply but finely imagined, with hog-like back, and long necks ending in canine heads. The next two disks are the simplest, but not the least wonderful. One represents Orpheus

pressing forward and awaking the dreadful shadows with the first notes of his lyre; the other, Eurydice, borne a bloodless shade upon pallid mists, just smitten with the sense of something heard. In the next design, which is formed of three circles, the central one of which slightly infringes on the others, is depicted the scene before Pluto and Proserpine, who, with their heads crowned with flame and bent in solemn interest, are listening to Orpheus, who is playing on his lyre to the right, while Eurydice, pale and anxious, scarcely yet hopeful, listens in the left. The next three circles represent the ascent. In the first, Orpheus, with his hands before his eyes, and Eurydice clutching his garments, hurry up the dread arcade. In the second, he turns, and Eurydice falls back, losing life and color. In the third, he gazes at her again, a pallid, death-like shade, hopeless and passionless. The last scene, which has been painted entirely by the artist's own hand, represents the death of Orpheus. Opening the lid, like opening a shell, discloses a very different scene and combination of color. Here all is bright and gay, from the gilded sounding-board sprinkled with rose-leaves to the inside of the lid, which is painted with a bright and elaborate design of 'Terra omniparens.' She is seated on a vine, whose branches and tendrils are painted a bright light blue, and whose boughs are populated with a number of naked babies—bad babies and good babies. The bad babies have an elfish expression and tails, and some are engaged in sucking eggs. Terra herself is a beautiful shadowy creature, with mysterious gray eyes. The most serious obstacle to the enjoyment of the painting of the lid, both in and out, is the supreme excellence of the designs on the sides. It is difficult to appreciate the most ingenious conceit after yielding to the magic of pathetic imagination."

We venture to suggest once more to our American piano makers, that it is time for them to do something in the way of reform in the shape and decoration of the grand piano. They are not generally lacking in enterprise, but apparently each firm is unwilling to be the first to depart from the conventional ugliness of the modern instrument. After a little while, however, some one of them, no doubt, will take the initiative. Whichever does so will certainly reap a reward for its shrewdness and foresight. It might be a good plan to offer a prize of a thousand dollars or more for the best design, and encourage our Alma Tadmors and Burne Joneses to enter into competition for it.

A BLIND largely used in Holland and Belgium is beginning to find favor in England, and probably will soon make its way to this country. It hangs closely to the window, is made of muslin, with large medallion pattern work on lace inserted in the middle. To the bottom of the blind is generally affixed a small border, which can also be continued on the two sides. The great advantage claimed for this blind is that although it does not exclude the light, but rather subdues it, it completely shuts out the view in the room from the gaze of the outer world. It can be made to roll up either from the top or bottom. The bottom method is preferable, owing to the lesser strain on the muslin.

CIRCULAR and hexagonal hall lamps, with bright brass frames, hinged bottoms, and leaded glass or bull's-eyes, in the early English style, have a large sale.

A SERIOUS source of discord in a room is a want of balance or consistency; silk curtains and woollen furniture coverings; a rare marquetry cabinet flanked by clumsy, featureless chairs of the early Victorian era; and in ornaments, Bohemian glass mixed up with old Venetian. There must be an equality maintained throughout. The room must be set in a certain key, and if allowed to fall out of it for the sake of variety, should speedily return into its normal channel.

THAT purity of style which insists on every article, even to the time-piece and fire-irons in a room, having the same points of family likeness, is a dull, narrow, uncongenial thing, and those who advocate it fail to recognize the broad principles underlying all true art whatsoever. Nevertheless, the eye must accustom itself to see clearly when and where to introduce furniture or trifles of a different order into a room already furnished in a certain style.